

THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH—ITS POWER.

In our previous article we noticed, that the purity of the church has reference to its principles. We now observe,

2ndly. The purity of the church has relation to *the affections*. It is not enough that we *think* correctly, and *believe* the truth ; we must *feel* aright. The *heart* is sought and demanded by Him from whom it has wandered, and unless it is voluntarily surrendered, and directed to proper objects, religion can exist only in name.

Purity of heart is a prominent feature of vital piety. He who has endowed us with various emotions, directs their application to Himself, as their proper centre. He requires them pure, unalloyed and undivided. The heart, the whole heart, must be consecrated to Him, and be employed in His service. He requires "truth in the *inward* parts." "The end of the commandment is love out of a *pure* heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." God is holy, and requires all who serve Him to be holy in "all manner of conversation." He is necessarily, absolutely, perfectly, and unchangeably pure—"the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "In Him is no darkness at all." As Charnock observes—"Purity is as requisite to the blessedness of God, as to the being of God : as he could not be God without being blessed, so he could not be blessed without being holy. Had God the least spot upon His purity, it would render Him as miserable in the midst of His infinite sufficiency, as iniquity renders a man in the confluence of his earthly enjoyments. The holiness and felicity of God are inseparable in Him." How then can we engage in His worship, and serve Him acceptably, unless we are in some measure pure ? There must be a resemblance between us and Him. We can have no "fellowship" with Him in any service, unless "we walk in the light, as He is in the light." The purity of outward symbols can form no substitute for purity of heart. *External* duties are important in their place, but unaccompanied with pure affections, they fall far short of the express injunctions of holy writ. The *form* of godliness should be attended with its *power* ; otherwise, it cannot be called a "reasonable service."

Purity of heart includes, we conceive, not only the *direction of the affections to spiritual objects* in all singleness and purity, but also *purity of intention and motive*. What is pleasing and acceptable to God, and what will conduce to His honour, are considerations that should actuate a Christian in the regulation of his emotions. We must not only be free from external impurity, and present a fair appearance of religious performances, but aim to cultivate holiness of heart. This the Saviour taught in opposition to the general views of the Jews, and the same lesson is inculcated in various portions of holy writ. We can have no clear apprehension of God's excellence and glory, nor realize the manifestation of His favour and love, unless we are thus pure. We do not say, that none can be the subjects of religion, but those whose hearts are free from *all* imperfection and error. For *where* is the Christian who has not reason to complain of numerous moral defects ? Whilst it is true that "the Lord looketh on the heart," and "weigheth the spirits," and that if we "regard iniquity in our hearts," He "will not hear ;" it is *equally* true, that *most* of God's people lament sad deficiencies with reference to the state and purity of their affections. They are so wild and wandering, divided and feeble in the service of God, that the utmost attention is requisite to control and direct them, and oftentimes the believer makes many bitter complaints against himself. President Edwards justly observes—"There are